United Nations A/53/370/Add.3

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 November 1998
English
Original: English/Spanish

Fifty-third session
Agenda item 31
Culture of peace

Consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The attached information, which was originally submitted to the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its 155th session, was received from several intergovernmental organizations. It is submitted to the General Assembly at the request of the Executive Board.

Annex

Information relating to a culture of peace received by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization from intergovernmental organizations not members of the United Nations system

Several interregional, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations that do not belong to the United Nations system have lent their support to the transdisciplinary project entitled "Towards a culture of peace" and expressed their interest in establishing a partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the context of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000. They include the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Council of Europe, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Secretariat-General of La Francophonie.

98-34254 (E) 161198 191198

Organization of American States

The following is an extract from a letter dated 29 May 1998 from the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

> The UNESCO initiative of a culture of peace programme, which will be presented to the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fifty-third session, deserves the full support of the international community and is clearly congruent with the principles underpinning the OAS mission in defence of democracy, freedom and the preservation of peace in the hemisphere of the Americas.
>
> The preliminary consolidated report to the United Nations on a culture of peace, which you submitted to the 154th session of the UNESCO Executive Board, is a comprehensive document which contains fundamental elements such as a draft declaration on the issue as well as a draft programme of action. As such, it constitutes a useful framework within which to build a cooperative strategy linking the efforts of the various international organizations, Governments and civil society towards a culture of peace.

The Declaration/Reaffirmation of Caracas, approved on 1 June 1998 by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the member countries of OAS at the second plenary meeting of the twenty-eighth ordinary session of OAS is contained in appendix I below.

Organization of African Unity

The decision on the culture of peace, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU at its thirty-fourth ordinary session, held at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 8 to 10 June 1998, is contained in appendix II below.

Economic Community of West African States

The following is an extract from a letter dated 18 March 1998 from the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

> ECOWAS has adopted legal instruments to promote regional security, peace and stability, these being prerequisites for the achievement of rapid regional integration and the socio-economic development of West Africa. The recent agreements concluded by ECOWAS have led to the establishment of peace in Liberia and, most recently, to a return to power of the elected President of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.
>
> As part of its efforts to establish an effective conflict-prevention mechanism and, in addition, with a view to promoting the culture of peace throughout the West African community, the Executive Secretariat is planning to organize a regional forum on the theme "Conflict management and resolution: the role of ECOWAS".

Council of Europe

The following is an extract from a letter dated 4 May 1998 from the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization regarding reso'utions 52/13 and 52/15 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1997:

> It is naturally with great pleasure that the Council of Europe will contribute to the work to be undertaken by UNESCO in this field.
>
> Like you, I am convinced that working to establish a culture of peace is one of the major challenges that our societies have to meet at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Association of South-East Asian Nations

The Statement on Peace in South-East Asia on the Eve of the Third Millennium, adopted by the participants in the ASEAN Regional Symposium on Cooperative Peace in South-East Asia, held at Jakarta, Indonesia, on 11 and 12 September 1998, is contained in appendix III below.

Commonwealth

The following is an extract from a letter dated 15 June 1998 from the Commonwealth Secretary-General to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization:

> The Commonwealth supports the UNESCO initiative for promoting a culture of peace, based on the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations, since this accords with the Commonwealth's own fundamental values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, respect for diversity and tolerance, equal rights for women and sustainable development.

A note by the Commonwealth Secretariat, dated 4 June 1998, on the UNESCO draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace is contained in appendix IV below.

International Organization of La Francophonie

The following is an extract from a letter dated 11 May 1998 from the Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, regarding United Nations General Assembly resolutions 52/13 on a culture of peace, and 52/15 on the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace, both of 20 November 1997:

> The International Organization of La Francophonie will contribute to the draft declaration and programme of action with suggestions and proposals. As you know, the preoccupation with peace and with the culture of peace which is a necessary prerequisite, has become essential to our organization as some of our Member States have been involved in dramatic internal or regional conflicts.

Appendix I

Declaration/Reaffirmation of Caracas, adopted at the second plenary session, held on 1 June 1998

We, the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the member countries of the Organization of American States, meeting in Caracas at this twenty-eighth regular session of its General Assembly, in the year marking the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Charter,

After a half century of progress towards a spirit of unity in the Hemisphere around the historic mission of providing for our peoples a land of freedom and an environment conducive to their integral development,

In view of the confirmed role of hemispheric partnership as essential to the welfare of our people and to strengthening a system of individual freedom and social justice based on respect for human rights within a framework of democratic institutions,

I

Recalling that the political will to strengthen the Organization and employ it as the natural forum for political dialogue, understanding, and cooperation in the Hemisphere in pursuit of the aims of the Charter was affirmed at the centennial of the inter-American system, by the General Assembly session in Asunción,

Reiterating, in the light of the Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System, our will to promote the revitalization of the Organization of American States,

Emphasizing, as did the General Assembly in Nassau, that international cooperation is crucial to solving the economic, social, and environmental problems of the countries of the hemisphere,

Noting that, the General Assembly, in Managua, when democracy, peace, and development were acknowledged to be inseparable and indivisible parts of a renewed and integral view of solidarity in the Americas, affirmed the need for greater opportunities for the development of our peoples, based on the commonality of inter-American interests, genuine interdependence, mutual benefits, and a spirit of shared responsibility,

Reaffirming the value of integration, recognized by the General Assembly, in Belém do Pará, as an instrument for creating new economic and social realities and a decisive factor in freeing the hemisphere of extreme poverty,

Mindful, in view of the challenges of globalization facing the hemispheric community, of the relevance of the objective, set forth by the General Assembly in Montrouis, of strengthening the capacity of multilateral organizations to promote cooperation among nations of the hemisphere,

Firm in the conviction, stated by the General Assembly in Panama, that multilateralism, through international cooperation, political dialogue and joint efforts, in the context of full respect for the sovereign will of States, is an effective instrument for realizing shared aspirations and overcoming the challenges facing the hemisphere,

Reaffirming that this historic occasion calls for coordinated efforts to develop, strengthen, and hone existing consensus-building mechanisms, an idea which led the General Assembly in Lima to define the OAS as the foremost instrument for consolidating a new hemispheric relationship characterized by partnership for development,

Taking into account the important contribution of the Summits of the Americas to strengthening the OAS and revitalizing its agenda,

II

Emphasizing that the 1985 Protocol of Cartagena de Indias, the 1991 Santiago Commitment, General Assembly resolution AG/RES.1080 (SSI-O/91) of 1991, and the 1992 Protocol of Washington give the Organization of American States an important role in defending and promoting democracy in the hemisphere,

Valuing the action taken by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in promoting and protecting the rights recognized in the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights (Pact of San José),

Confirming that the body of inter-American human rights law has been developed, since the Pact of San José, by way of the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty, the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Protocol of San Salvador), the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, the Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons, and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará),

Aware that reinforcing democracy, peace, and the full enjoyment of human rights is central to the hemispheric agenda and a fundamental aim of the Organization,

Convinced that, with the entry into force of the Protocol of Managua, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) – a forum for inter-American dialogue that promotes joint action to address the challenges of development – is a key instrument for realizing the objectives of partnership for development and overcoming poverty,

Highlighting the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 1997–2001 as a tool for defining policies, programmes and measures for CIDI in the areas of social development and the creation of productive employment, education, economic diversification and integration, trade liberalization and market access, scientific development and exchange and transfer of technology, strengthening of democratic institutions, sustainable development of tourism, sustainable development and the environment, and culture, which are priorities of multilateral cooperation,

Recognizing that responsible and organized participation by communities guarantees the stability of democracy, governability, and integral development,

Reaffirming the need to incorporate sustainable development strategies, since they are essential to achieving economic, social, and environmental goals in a balanced and complementary manner,

Pointing to progress made towards establishing the Free Trade Area of the Americas and the formal start-up of negotiations as evidence of our countries' capacity for economic consensus, based on coexistence with bilateral and subregional agreements, as described in the March 1998 Ministerial Declaration of San José,

Determined to strengthen the hemispheric response, with the entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, to a syndrome that undermines the legitimacy of public institutions and subverts the moral order and integral development of nations,

Confirming our staunch commitment to fighting terrorism in all its forms, as provided in the Declaration and Plan of Action on Hemispheric Cooperation to Prevent, Combat, and Eliminate Terrorism, as an expression of our strong condemnation and repudiation of all forms of terrorism, by whomever and however they are perpetrated, as acts that constitute a violation of the essential rights of individuals,

Stressing that the confidence- and security-building measures recommended at the Santiago and San Salvador Regional Conferences are an important contribution to transparency, mutual understanding, regional security, and peace,

Convinced that strengthening representative democracy, economic and social development, stepping up integration processes, and partnership between member States are fundamental to reinforcing peace and security in the region,

Recalling the mandate issued to the OAS at the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Americas to revitalize and strengthen the institutions of the inter-American system related to the various aspects of hemispheric security,

Reaffirming that the hemispheric security climate has also been enhanced by the General Assembly decision to reaffirm the goals of achieving global elimination of anti-personnel land mines and converting the Western Hemisphere into an anti-personnel land-mine-free zone, in addition to completing mine-clearing in Central America by the year 2000 and continuing with the Mine-Clearing Assistance Program in that region; recognizing as well the importance of programmes for the preventive education of civilians as to the danger of anti-personnel mines, the physical and psychological rehabilitation of victims, and the socio-economic recovery of demined areas,

Reiterating that the full ratification and imminent entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials is key to combating and eradicating this serious problem and, at the same time, helps to increase confidence, security, and cooperation among States,

Persuaded of the need to foster greater understanding of the special security concerns of small island States,

Convinced of the importance of the Anti-drug Strategy in the Hemisphere as a coordinated response by the Americas to reduce the illicit consumption and production of, and illicit traffic in, narcotics and psychotropic substances,

Reiterating the importance of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the Second Summit of the Americas in galvanizing an alliance against drugs, together with the aim of increasing mutual trust, dialogue, and hemispheric cooperation by developing a single, objective, multilateral process of governmental evaluation to follow up on the individual and collective progress of efforts by the Hemisphere and by all its countries to address the various manifestations of the problem,

III

Mindful that, just as this 50th anniversary is an invitation to celebrate the commonality of democratic values in the Hemisphere, it also commits us to achieving the full promotion and protection of the essential human rights and to establishing circumstances in which human beings can progress both spiritually and materially,

Reaffirming that fighting poverty is essential to peaceful coexistence, social harmony, and developing and strengthening democratic institutions,

Recalling that, at the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, the Heads of State and Government of the Hemisphere reaffirmed the importance of education as a prerequisite to and determining factor in the social, cultural, political, and economic development of our nations,

Recalling once more that economic growth is essential, but not sufficient in itself, for improving the quality of life, overcoming poverty, and eliminating discrimination and social exclusion, and that the region's experience shows the need for growth aimed at promoting economic development with equity and social justice,

Mindful that the ideals of peace, social justice, integral development, and solidarity are constant challenges for our democracies,

Reaffirm:

The intent to strengthen multilateralism as an expression of the unity that guides our efforts to reinforce the principles and accomplish the purposes enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of American States;

The firm commitment to review the institutional structure of the inter-American system, particularly the Organization of American States, in order to strengthen and update its responsiveness to the challenges of the coming century, adapt it to new realities in the Hemisphere, achieve greater complementarity between its various bodies, and lend it the necessary organizational efficiency, as mandated by our Heads of State and Government in the Declaration of Santiago, adopted at the Second Summit of the Americas;

The intention to continue an ongoing and creative effort to safeguard and consolidate democracy in the hemisphere while respecting the principles of self-determination and non-intervention;

The commitment to build a culture of peace, development, and non-violence, recognizing the right to peace as inalienable and intrinsic to human dignity;

The decision to establish, as a priority area of the Organization's activities, mechanisms for support, cooperation, and follow-up of justice system reform processes for those member States that so request;

The determination to continue to strengthen and fine-tune the inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights and to promote the inter-American programme for the international promotion of human rights, noting that promotion and protection are related and mutually reinforcing concepts;

The decision, adopted at the Second Summit of the Americas, to promote the signature or ratification of, or accession to, as appropriate, the instruments that make up the body of inter-American law pertaining to human rights;

The commitment to complete the preparation of legal instruments to protect the rights of indigenous populations and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, and to make further progress in the study and development, in accordance with inter-American instruments, of measures designed to improve detention and prison conditions; promote and protect women's rights and institute a gender equity perspective at all levels; promote and safeguard the human rights of all migrant workers and their families; address the situation of refugees, repatriated persons, and internally displaced persons; promote the establishment and observance of the rights of children in the Americas; and guarantee respect for freedom of expression;

The intent to foster more active participation by civil society in public affairs;

The decision to continue supporting economic integration efforts with a view to achieving and consolidating free trade in the Americas and, in particular, strengthening the actions taken by the Organization regarding the legal development of integration;

The intent to promote the stability of democratic institutions in the countries of the hemisphere, for which we confirm the approach taken in the Inter-American Program for Cooperation in the Fight against Corruption, in the Declaration and the Plan of Action on Hemispheric Cooperation to Prevent, Combat, and Eliminate Terrorism, in the Anti-drug Strategy in the Hemisphere, in combating money laundering, and in the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 1997–2001, and we point to the importance of sharing experience to prevent illegal contributions to electoral campaign funds;

The commitment to consolidate the significant strides made in confidence and security in the hemisphere, as a true expression of the culture and tradition of peace in the region and the democratic values that shape that peace;

The intent to continue consultations and the sharing of ideas in the hemisphere to further the limitation and control of conventional weapons in the region;

The certainty that the security of small island States, faced with special concerns of various kinds, could be increased if policy dialogue and cooperation programmes for this subregion were strengthened;

The commitment to make the utmost effort, at the highest level, to ensure the earliest possible implementation of the mandate, issued at the Second Summit of the Americas, to develop a single, objective, multilateral evaluation process to follow up on individual and collective efforts by the hemisphere as a whole and by all its countries to address the various manifestations of the drug problem;

The determination to consolidate the agreements adopted at the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and for that purpose, to strengthen existing mechanisms with the Organization;

The firm intent to implement the actions entrusted to the Organization of American States by the Summits of the Americas in Miami and Santiago and to coordinate with other institutions in the inter-American system to carry out those tasks;

Therefore, we, the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the OAS member States, on behalf of our peoples, and during this Assembly session marking the 50th anniversary of the Organization, reaffirm the commitment to the defense and promotion of representative democracy and human rights in the region, the firm will to achieve development with social justice, and the determination to make the Americas a land of peace and well-being.

Appendix II

Decision on the culture of peace, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its thirty-fourth ordinary session, held at Ouagadougou from 8 to 10 June 1998

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in its thirty-fourth ordinary session in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, from 8 to 10 June 1998,

1. *Welcomes* the decision taken by the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace;

2. *Considers* the International Year as a propitious occasion to substitute the culture of war and violence which characterized the last millennium of human history with a culture of peace by promoting values, attitudes and behaviours which constitute the foundations thereof;

3. *Calls on* member States to set up national committees comprising all sectors of society to implement activities in respect of the International Year aimed at enhancing reconciliation and national unity through the culture of peace;

4. *Calls on* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and all other concerned institutions, to coordinate their efforts with a view to implementing the International Year for the Culture of Peace;

5. *Further calls on* the Secretary-General, in concert with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and all other concerned agencies and institutions to promote within member States, activities to celebrate the Year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and *commends* the Director-General for this laudable initiative.

Appendix III

Statement on Peace in South-East Asia on the Eve of the Third Millennium, adopted on 12 September 1998 at the ASEAN Symposium on Cooperative Peace in South-East Asia, held at Jakarta, Indonesia, on 11 and 12 September 1998

We, the participants in the Regional Symposium on Cooperative Peace in South-East Asia, held in the framework of UNESCO's project "Towards a culture of peace" and in the context of ASEAN's cooperative peace activities and convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 11 and 12 September 1998, on the joint initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Association of South-East Asian Nations,

1. *Aware* that, on the very eve of the twenty-first century, the nations of South-East Asia are called upon to rise to unprecedented new challenges, in a spirit of reinforced cooperation and solidarity, in order to consolidate peace and foster development for the benefit of their peoples,

2. *Underlining* the importance of the progress made in the framework of ASEAN for ensuring cooperative peace in South-East Asia,

3. *Acknowledging* the importance for the peoples of South-East Asia of the new perspectives opened by the culture of peace which UNESCO has been promoting throughout the world in order to build the defences of peace in the minds of men, as called upon by its Constitution,

4. *Convinced* that the spirit of intellectual and moral solidarity, equality and partnership as promoted by UNESCO and ASEAN is a key factor for ensuring lasting peace, sustainable social and economic development, and dialogue among peoples and cultures,

5. *Considering* furthermore that without peace there can be no development and that without development there can be no lasting peace,

6. *Underlining* the fact that the construction of peace, sustainable economic and social development and respect for the democratic principles of justice, freedom, mutual tolerance and solidarity go hand in hand,

7. *Conscious* that a new approach to security is necessary in order to take into account non-military threats to peace and security, in particular extreme poverty, environmental degradation and the aggravation of social inequalities, and in order to identify the ways and means for their eradication at the source,

8. *Aware* of our responsibility towards future generations and their right to live in peace and in a healthy environment,

9. *Stressing* the need for the reinforcement of the long-standing cooperation between the nations of South-East Asia and UNESCO in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication, in particular with a view to enhancing the contribution of the stakeholders in these fields to peace, development and democracy in the region,

10. *Recalling* that the General Assembly of the United Nations has proclaimed the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace, for which UNESCO will act as lead agency within the United Nations system,

11. *Recalling* that the Fifth ASEAN Summit, held in Bangkok on 14 and 15 December 1995, declared that "Cooperative peace and shared prosperity shall be the fundamental goals of ASEAN",

Do hereby state:

12. The nations of South-East Asia, bound together by centuries of history and culture, have made significant progress in the last three decades to found a prosperous and peaceful community in the framework of ASEAN. They are called upon today, maybe more than ever before, to reaffirm their determination to ensure their peaceful, progressive and endogenous development in accordance with the ideals and aspirations of their peoples. Indeed, the economic, financial and environmental issues which have affected many of the countries of the region during the past year must be addressed on the basis of strengthened bonds of regional solidarity and cooperation, considering that the countries of South-East Asia share a primary responsibility for strengthening the economic and social stability of the region as embodied in the ASEAN Declaration of 1967.

13. In this context, strategies for attenuating the effects of the current problems on the poorest sectors of the population, in particular in the fields of education, health, nutrition, and productive employment, should be implemented rapidly in a spirit of a caring society. Preventive strategies should also be implemented in the field of environmental protection with a view to preserving and ensuring the sustainable use of the natural resources of each country and of the region as a whole. At the same time, the achievements made in the nations of South-East Asia in the fields of education and science and technology development must be preserved from erosion at a time when national budgets are faced with various constraints derived from the economic and financial situation affecting the region.

14. The interactions between peace and development in the context of open societies, consistent with their respective national identities, shall continue to progress in the region, through the effective mobilization of all pertinent institutions and key social actors, towards the fostering of a culture of peace. Indeed, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the dialogue between cultures and religions, and the promotion of tolerance are, *inter alia*, key factors for giving a solid foundation to all endogenous development efforts, ensuring the participation of all. In this framework, education has a key role to play in nurturing shared values and, in particular, education for cooperative peace, social justice, rule of law, tolerance and international understanding, which should be fostered at all levels of education.

15. The progress made in the field of cooperative peace in the framework of ASEAN should be consolidated through the mobilization of all institutions and individuals that are committed to building a lasting peace in South-East Asia, in particular on the occasion of the year 2000, proclaimed International Year for the Culture of Peace by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

16. We therefore call upon UNESCO and ASEAN to reinforce their cooperation through the undertaking of joint endeavours, which can contribute to the consolidation of peace and security, development and democracy in South-East Asia.

17. We commend UNESCO and ASEAN for having jointly taken the initiative of organizing the Regional Symposium on Cooperative Peace in South-East Asia, which will undoubtedly open new avenues for closer dialogue and cooperation in South-East Asia as well as between South-East Asia and other regions of the world. Indeed, we cherish the hope that all the above-mentioned initiatives will contribute to strengthening the foundations for peace in the third millennium for all the nations of South-East Asia, and express our commitment to further the cause of peace and dialogue through the thorough implementation

of those initiatives. For it is in peace and through peace that the nations of South-East Asia will be able to secure the future of their peoples and contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and the attainment of the common ends of mankind.

Appendix IV

Note on the UNESCO draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace, issued by the Commonwealth Secretariat on 4 June 1998

The Commonwealth Secretariat welcomes the initiative of UNESCO to promote and develop a culture of peace based on the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations. The Commonwealth supports the basic principles underlying a culture of peace, which are democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, respect for diversity and tolerance, equal rights for women and the integration of women in sustainable development.

As a globally representative international organization, the Commonwealth is an effective instrument to promote and sustain the tenets of democracy and good governance, which are fundamental to the achievement of peace within nations and for the global community.

The Commonwealth remains the largest global intergovernmental association of countries after the United Nations. The global reach of the Commonwealth gives the organization its strength, as its membership straddles all the major intergovernmental groupings (the Group of Eight, the Group of 77, the European Union, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Organization of African Unity, La Francophonie, the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Community, the Indian Ocean Commission and the South Pacific Forum).

The uniqueness of the Commonwealth is based on its values of democracy and good governance which embrace the principles of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government, unity through diversity, human rights including gender equality, and the promotion of sustainable development.

The Harare Commonwealth Declaration of 1991 marked a turning point for the Commonwealth, providing the association's charter for the 1990s and beyond. The Harare Declaration was complemented in 1995 by the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme on the Harare Declaration and in 1997 by the Edinburgh Commonwealth Economic Declaration.

In order to meet these new challenges, the Commonwealth draws on its unique strengths and character, based on the shared values and principles of its 54 member States with a population of some 1.7 billion people.

Combined with its strong tradition of consensus-building, the Commonwealth seeks to promote tolerance and unity through pluralism, promotion of the democratic ethic and commitment to international treaties and conventions governing peace and development. The Commonwealth is thus well-placed to defuse and prevent conflict situations within its membership.

The Commonwealth has been able to "build bridges" through such preventive mechanisms as the Secretary-General's "good offices role", and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration, which deals with serious or persistent violations of the Harare Principles.

Other important activities carried out by the Commonwealth include the election observation missions undertaken at the request of Governments. These missions fulfil a critical role in member States, to enhance the credibility of electoral processes. The election

observer missions are complemented by the provision of technical assistance in institution-building in critical areas of good governance.

In February 1997, the Commonwealth took the initiative to convene a Roundtable of Heads of Government on Democracy and Good Governance in Commonwealth Africa. This activity provided the opportunity for Opposition and Government party leaders of 18 Commonwealth African countries to meet, some for the first time, to discuss the progress of democracy in their respective countries and in Africa in general.

The Commonwealth is also interested in looking at other barriers and challenges to the progress of peace in many countries and the world as a whole. One such challenge is the conflict created by divisive pluralism, which can impede the achievement of peace and democracy in any country and region. A joint workshop on the subject is being organized by the Commonwealth and UNESCO late in 1998.

The Commonwealth also actively implements various programmes in the critical areas of poverty alleviation, health and education, environment, food security, debt, trade, investment and human resource development. These practical programmes provide building-blocks for development, peace and security. Because of the Commonwealth's global reach and consensual approach on these various issues, it is often easier to put into practice more effective and coordinated multilateral strategies at the regional and international levels.

The evolution of the Commonwealth itself attests to the expanded role of the association to deal more effectively with the growing challenges and complex issues facing member States. Several countries have joined or returned to the association in recent years, and still others wish to join.

The Commonwealth has been cooperating with a number of other regional and international bodies to improve the effectiveness of programmes in areas critical to democracy, peace and development. Thus, together, these organizations could explore the possibilities of enhancement of programme effectiveness through practical examples of cooperation on common issues, exchange of experience and resource sharing. Such collaborative partnerships on national, regional and especially global concerns could contribute further to the global vision for a culture of peace and development.

The Commonwealth is not just an association of Governments. It is also an association of peoples, consisting of a vast network of professional and non-governmental organizations representing the "unofficial" Commonwealth. The civil society within the Commonwealth provides a strong complement and support to the "official" activities of the association. It is accepted that a vigorous and robust, well-informed and empowered civil society can be a powerful force for peace.

Historically, women themselves have always been anti-war and against violence in view of their roles as mothers and wives. In times of conflict, women and children have always been the victims without being able to participate in the processes of decision-making in the areas of peace-building, and the resolution and prevention of conflicts.

At all levels, there must be equality of opportunities and outcomes for men and women in order for societies to have the human resources and richness to lay down the foundations for an enduring and sustainable foundation for the culture of peace. The Commonwealth promotes the full integration of women at all levels of the decision-making processes including the political arena, peace-building, and resolution and prevention of conflicts.

Recently, a series of regional and pan-Commonwealth workshops have been convened to promote the participation of women in the critical areas of politics and peace-building and prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Some salient recommendations from the African and Asia/Europe Commonwealth regional workshops on the issues of women and peace, *inter alia*, were: increasing women's proactive participation in processes of peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution; ensuring representation of women in key decision-making positions; recognizing people's initiatives for peace in the region and building on these initiatives; examining the impact of conflict on women; putting into place relevant policies; and including skills training in peace-building and conflict prevention and resolution in the school curriculum.

Likewise, the Commonwealth also recognizes the potentially critical role of youths as "ambassadors" and "implementers" of the culture of peace. In the Commonwealth Programme of Action for Youth Empowerment to the Year 2005, emphasis is put on the need to educate, in the wider sense, the children and youth of today within the perspective of the fundamental values of democracy and good governance, the rule of law and justice for all, human rights including gender equality, peace and development, and unity through diversity.

The Commonwealth fully endorses and supports the United Nations decision that the year 2000 be declared the International Year for the Culture of Peace in order to promote peace and non-violence. The Commonwealth also seeks to contribute effectively towards a global culture of peace which would be sustainable for all its members and partners in the international community.